



Reel Grrls Executive Summary: EJNA 2010

Reel Grrls worked with elementary school students from Southshore School in Seattle to create three short videos to educate other young people on environmental issues. Topics were chosen by youth participants with adult input and included:

- Reuse of everyday objects
- Container gardening
- How litter affects the watershed

53 children were educated in environmental issues through:

- Surveying and photographing the school garden
- Growing kale and chard plants in milk containers
- Animating a drawing of a plant growing
- Reading stories about gardening
- Creating new products out of common objects (water bottles, cups, paper, etc.)
- Field trips to Mara Farms, Islandwood and Longfellow Creek
- Watching a variety of films about environmental issues
- Presentations by outside experts from organizations including: Killer Whale Tales: Environmental studies through storytelling, Seattle Tilth and PCC cooks.

Youth were then trained to make animated videos about environmental issues. They were trained to plan films, write scripts, create storyboards, make artwork for videos and animate their characters to illustrate collectively written stories. In making this work, the students became more aware of important environmental issues and had a chance to share this information through innovative video techniques. These videos used 3 different animation techniques--cut paper, pixilation, which is animation of people, and 3D animation. The videos also used very limited written or spoken language so as to be understood by English Language Learners and Immigrant populations. This project takes advantage of the fact that young people will listen to their peers and culminated in 3 public and family presentations.



Teaching through doing was very important to the success of this project because children were able to learn actively and integrate that learning into what they are teaching others through the video. In addition, using animation as a tool really allows us to reach people at the same time as teaching innovation and creativity. Finally, by not lecturing our audience and by staying positive, we are able to reach audiences who might be a bit jaded by too much media messaging.



After being coached in public speaking, some of the children were chosen to introduce their work and all had an opportunity to answer audience questions at the screenings. There were approximately 265 people at the “Premiere” event at South Shore School, followed by a library event of 26 and an assembly of approximately 669 children and 72 school staff. In addition, the video has been posted on the Reel Grrl’s Vimeo page as well as Puget Sound Off and Facebook. We are collaborating with the Aquarium, Islandwood and the Burke Museum who all have teaching kits they might include the DVD in to loan out to King County Educators. Finally, the Seattle Public Schools Science Department is posting the video on their website for access by teachers in the district. The total number of audience reached is hard to predict but the number at screenings alone is 1032 so far. We have also been discussing the possibility of showing the video in an Islandwood summit of youth in the spring 2011.

The most palpable success of this project can be seen in the children’s enthusiasm shown throughout the training. They loved learning about the environment and they loved filming. Sharing what they learned through making movies was a perfect way to reinforce and celebrate their knowledge. We tried to offer all children opportunities to be involved with the actual making of the movies and any time there was a task that needed workers, practically every hand went up to help. They were eager to be involved and willing to learn and experiment. This kind of learning is contagious.